UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/C.5/50/L.12
18 December 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
FIFTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 119

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Draft resolution submitted by the Chairman
following informal consultations

A

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences, 1/

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, 46/190 of 20 December 1991, 47/202 of 22 December 1992, 48/222 of 23 December 1993 and 49/221 of 23 December 1994,

Noting with concern the difficulties confronted by some Member States owing to the lack of conference services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the work of the Committee on Conferences;

2. Approves the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for the biennium 1996-1997 as submitted and amended by the Committee on Conferences; 2/

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 32 and addenda (A/50/32 and Add.1 and 2).

2/ Ibid., annex II.

3. Authorizes the Committee on Conferences to make adjustments in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1996 that may become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

4. Notes that no sessions are scheduled to open or close on 20 February and 29 April 1996, invites United Nations bodies to avoid holding meetings on 20 February and 29 April 1996, and requests the Secretariat to make similar arrangements when drafting the revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997;

5. Invites the Economic and Social Council to continue to consider, as appropriate, the biennialization of meetings of its subsidiary bodies;

6. Invites all bodies to exercise restraint in requesting open-ended ad hoc meetings in view of the possible adverse effect of such meetings on the efficient utilization of conference-servicing resources;

7. Expresses concern that the overall utilization factor for conference services fell below the established benchmark figure of 80 per cent in 1994;

8. Endorses the initiatives taken by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences with a view to assisting bodies to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources and, to that effect, to assess realistically their need for such resources;

9. Requests the Secretariat to take the measures recommended by the Committee on Conferences to enhance utilization of conference-servicing resources and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences;

10. Expresses concern about the underutilization of conference facilities at duty stations outside Headquarters, and emphasizes the need to make the most effective use possible of such facilities;

11. Requests the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to hold consultations with various bodies and committees to ensure rational allocation and capacity utilization of all United Nations conference facilities at headquarters, United Nations centres and other duty stations with a view to addressing the present imbalance in order to enhance the capacity utilization and cost-effectiveness of these facilities and to report to the Committee on the outcome of these consultations at its substantive session of 1996;

12. Decides that the headquarters rule shall be adhered to by all bodies, particularly those whose headquarters are underutilized;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to provide, within the resources approved for conference services in the biennium 1996-1997, interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, taking into account the priority due to meetings included in the calendar of conferences and meetings, and to submit a report on

the implementation of this decision to the Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences.

B

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions on the control and limitation of documentation, including resolutions 33/56 of 14 December 1978, 36/117 B of 10 December 1981, 37/14 C of 16 November 1982, 45/238 B of 21 December 1990, 47/202 B of 22 December 1992, 48/222 B of 23 December 1993 and 49/221 B of 23 December 1994,

Encouraging all bodies entitled to written meeting records to keep under review their need for such records,

1. Decides, pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 49/221 B, that the current entitlement to meeting records of the following bodies shall be continued:

(a) United Nations Administrative Tribunal (when holding oral hearings);

(b) First Committee;

(c) Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (when holding meetings in observance of international days of solidarity proclaimed by the General Assembly);

(d) Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

2. Approves the recommendation of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to replace its verbatim records by summary records; 3/

3. Takes note of the intention of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace its verbatim records by unedited transcripts, 4/ and requests the Committee to keep the General Assembly informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of the experience of that body regarding unedited transcripts;

4. Takes note of the decision of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 75 of its report, 1/ and requests the Committee to report on the implementation of that decision to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/50/23), Part I, paras. 56 and 57.

4/ Ibid., Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20), para. 180.

C

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the statement made by the representative of the Secretary-General to the Fifth Committee in October 1995 on, inter alia, the costs of documentation, 5/

Recognizing the right of Member States, through intergovernmental bodies, to request reports,

Recognizing that Member States can contribute directly to the reduction of documentation, which contributes to savings, through restraint in making such requests,

Recognizing also that the reduction in the demand for and volume of documentation could improve the quality and timeliness of reports,

Noting that Economic and Social Council decision 1995/222 of 5 May 1995, entitled "Documentation", requires Secretariat accountability regarding seriously tardy reports,

Noting also that some actions taken by the Committee on Conferences and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space can result in lower documentation costs, while also noting that the political and financial impact of such actions has to be assessed by the General Assembly,

Recognizing the right of Member States to request circulation of communications as official documents,

1. Takes note with concern that the existing limits of 32 pages and 24 pages for documents prepared for intergovernmental meetings, confirmed by resolution 36/117 A of 10 December 1981 and endorsed by resolution 38/32 E of 25 November 1983, respectively, are not routinely enforced;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to enforce, where appropriate, the existing page limits referred to in the foregoing paragraph in respect of all documents originating in the Secretariat, to review these limits, where appropriate, with a view to achieving an overall reduction of documentation without affecting its quality and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to include only where necessary brief descriptions of the history of the subjects contained in the reports together with a reference to relevant documents, bearing in mind the need to restrict the number of pages to the limits referred to in paragraph 1 of the present resolution;

5/ See A/C.5/50/SR.4.

4. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that documentation is available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents, simultaneously in each of the six official languages of the United Nations;

5. Decides that, should a report be issued late, the reasons for the delay should be indicated when the report is introduced;

6. Requests members of all bodies to exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports;

7. Invites all bodies to consider the possibility of biennializing or triennializing the presentation of reports, to review the necessity of all recurrent documents with a view to streamlining documentation and contributing to savings and to make appropriate recommendations;

8. Encourages members of intergovernmental bodies:

(a) To consider the possibility of requesting oral reports, without prejudice to the provision of information to delegations in all the official languages;

(b) To request consolidated reports on related topics under a single item or sub-item where appropriate and cost-effective;

9. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To provide an oral estimate of the cost of documents or reports requested by Member States, without prejudice to the right of intergovernmental bodies to request such documents or reports;

(b) To seek a more reader-friendly and uniform format of reports, taking into account new publishing technologies, that would include sections containing the objective of the report, an executive summary, the conclusions drawn and, as appropriate, the action proposed to be taken by the body, and to submit proposals thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

10. Endorses the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Joint Inspection Unit be requested to conduct a comprehensive survey of the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective in this regard; 6/

11. Requests the Secretary-General to present to the Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the implementation of these measures, including information on possible savings.

6/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/50/7), para. 83.

D

The General Assembly,

Stressing the need to provide Member States and United Nations bodies, upon request, with more comprehensive and accurate information on the costs of meetings and documentation,

Noting that the introduction of new technologies enhances the quality, cost-effectiveness and efficiency of conference services,

Stressing the importance of access to and benefit from the optical disk system and other new technologies in all official languages by all Member States and the need to overcome the difficulties faced by some Member States in acquiring the technology to access the optical disk system,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to develop as soon as possible a comprehensive and accurate cost-accounting system for conference services, to report on the progress of its implementation to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences and to report the results of its use to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in accordance with their respective mandates;

2. Further encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to improve the cost-effectiveness of document production, without prejudice to the international character of the Organization;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to present proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee on Conferences on facilitating access by developing countries to the optical disk system in all official languages, taking into account the possible savings from reduced copying and distribution costs;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, in pursuing the foregoing efforts, to ensure that new technologies in the area of conference services are introduced in all official languages as soon as possible in a comprehensive manner without adverse effects on the provision of services, in full consultation with Member States and, as appropriate, in coordination with relevant intergovernmental bodies.

E

The General Assembly,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on the use of languages in the United Nations, including resolutions 2 (I) of 1 February 1946, 2247 (XXI) of 20 December 1966, 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967, 3189 (XXVIII), 3190 (XXVIII) and 3191 (XXVIII) of 18 December 1973, 36/117 B of 10 December 1981 and 47/202 D of 22 December 1992, 49/221 B of 23 December 1994 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995,

Recalling also its request to the Secretariat, contained in resolution 49/221 C, to continue exploring ways and means of providing conference services in a manner that fully responds to the needs of intergovernmental and expert bodies, while ensuring the criteria of quality and timeliness and due respect to the principle of equal treatment of the official languages of the United Nations as laid down in General Assembly resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987,

1. Emphasizes the need for strict compliance with the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the different bodies and organs of the United Nations;

2. Stresses the need to continue to ensure the availability of the necessary resources to guarantee the timely translation of documents into the different official and working languages of the Organization and their simultaneous distribution in those languages;

3. Appreciates the fact that, through advanced technology, as well as improved management and increased productivity, the Secretariat has largely been enabled to cope with the growth in demand for translation and documentation services;

4. Notes the actions taken to improve the quality of translation into all official languages, in particular the efforts of the Arabic Translation Service to implement the proposal contained in annex II to the report of the Committee on Conferences to the forty-ninth session of the Assembly 7/ requests the Secretary-General to undertake a thorough review of the terminology and technical methods used in translation into Arabic, and urges the Secretariat to speed up its efforts towards the implementation of phase II of that proposal and to report thereon to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 1996.

F

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolution 49/221 D of 23 December 1994,

Noting with satisfaction the significant improvements in the meeting arrangements and facilities within the United Nations premises for the holding of bilateral meetings and contacts among Member States during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and during the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations,

1. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for their prompt and effective actions to implement resolution 49/221 D;

7/ Ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 30 (A/49/32/Rev.1).

2. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide these improved meeting arrangements and facilities for subsequent sessions of the General Assembly;

3. Decides that such improved meeting arrangements and facilities shall be made available within existing resources.